

## SOME NEW LIGHT ON THE TREATY OF BHYROWAL (DEC. 16. 1846) THROWN BY THE PRIVATE LETTERS OF SIR HENRY HARDINGE

(By Sardar Ganda Singh, M. A.)

It had been stipulated in Article I of the supplementary Articles of Agreement concluded between the British Government and the Lahore Durbar, on the 11th of March, 1846, that "The British Government shall leave at Lahore, till the close of the current year, A.D. 1846, such force as shall seem to the Governor General adequate for the purpose of protecting the person of the Maharaja, and the inhabitants of the City of Lahore, during the reorganization of the Sikh army, in accordance with the provisions of Article 6 of the Treaty of Lahore; that force to be withdrawn at any convenient time before the expiration of the year, if the object to be fulfilled shall, in the opinion of the Durbar, have been obtained; but the force shall not be retained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year"<sup>1</sup>.

As the year 1846 drew towards its close, the Lahore Durbar began to concert measures for the new arrangements to be made for the Government of the Punjab after the withdrawal of the British Troops as stipulated above. Sir Henry Hardinge, on the other hand, wished, for political reasons, to retain the British troops in the Punjab, and to tighten the British control over the country. The Queen-mother, Maharani Jind Kaur, who acted as Regent for her minor son, the Maharaja Duleep Singh, was also in favour of the retention of the British troops under the terms of the then existing treaties of the 9th and 11th March 1846, as long as, according to Article 15 (9th March), "the British Government will not exercise any interference in the internal administration of the Lahore State—but in all cases or questions which may be referred to the British Government, the Governor General will give the aid of his advice for the furtherance of the interests of the Lahore Government."<sup>2</sup> Henry Lawrence tells us in his report of 17th December, 1846, that "till within the last few days, no one has expressed a more anxious desire for our stay than the Maharani; and even on the day (5th December, 1846)<sup>3</sup> following that on which Rajah Lal Singh was deposed from the Wazarat, and her grief was at the worst, she declared to me, when I called on her, that she would leave the Punjab when we did".

But apparently she was soon disillusioned about the intentions of Sir Henry Hardinge who aimed at giving to the British Resident "unlimited authority in all matters of internal administration and external relation," which, for all practical purposes, meant the end of the Sikh State, the Darbar, the Queen-mother, and the Maharaja all reduced to nonentities. And, therefore, there was a marked change in the attitude of the Maharani and the Chiefs of the Darbar. The price that they were required to pay for the continuance of the British force at Lahore by transfer of all control in internal and external matters into the British hands was prohibitive. Translated in political terms, it was a conversion of the independent State of the Punjab into a Province of the Government of British India. This gave a more active turn to the inclinations of Maharani Jind Kaur, and, in the words of Sir Henry Lawrence, "During the last day or two, her whole energies have been devoted to an endeavour to win over the Sirdars of high and low degree, and unite them all together in a scheme of independent government, of which she herself was to be the

<sup>1</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, 1892, Vol. IX, No. XVII, pp. 43-4

<sup>2</sup> Aitchison, *Treaties*, 1892, Vol. IX, No. XVI, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Lal Singh was removed from Wazarat on the 4th December, 1846 *Trial of Raja Lal Singh* (Punjab Govt. Record Office monograph No. 16) p. 26.

head. In this her chief aid and counsellor has ostensibly been Dewan Deena Nath, ever ill-disposed to the English, and now probably contemplating with alarm the possibility of our becoming the guardians of the young Maharaja, and—what he would less like—the guardians of the exchequer”<sup>1</sup>.

But Sir Henry Hardinge was determined, as his private letters to Frederick Currie tell us, to assume all and full powers and to place the new Resident on the footing of a then Lieutenant Governor of a British Indian Province like the U. P. From Camp Bhyrowal, on the 10th December 1846, he wrote to Currie, then at Lahore in connection with the trial of Lall Singh. “I have no doubt on the subject. You are the person best qualified to ensure the success of a British administration under novel and difficult circumstances in the Punjab, and in such case I should place you on the same footing as the Lt. Governor”.

Currie reported to him the unwillingness of the chiefs of the Darbar to agree to the new arrangements proposed by the British Government. Sir Henry Hardinge acknowledges to be in the know of this unwillingness of the Darbar in his letter of the 10th December when he says that “the coyness of the Durbar and the Sirdars is very natural.” This should have been sufficient for him to withdraw the British force from the Punjab, as agreed upon in the last sentences of the first Article of the Agreement of 11th March 1846 which laid down for the “force to be withdrawn at any convenient time before the year, if the object to be fulfilled shall, *in the opinion of the Durbar*, have been obtained; but the force shall not be retained at Lahore beyond the expiration of the current year”. Now *the opinion of the Durbar* was not for active hearty willingness to agree to the new arrangements being proposed, and the current year, 1846 A.D. was also about to expire. The Maharani was also within her rights to endeavour to enlist the sympathies of the Sirdars “and unite them all together in a scheme of independent government”. But Henry Hardinge would not only not withdraw the British troops from Lahore, but wished to tighten his grip on the State of the Punjab, apparently for political exigencies. But he would not do it in a straight forward manner, himself making the proposal on behalf of the British India Government to the Lahore Durbar, asking for the retention of the British troops in the Punjab and for unlimited control over their country. He wanted to give to the world outside a different appearance to the new arrangement. He wanted to show that he was agreeing to it at the express request of the Lahore Durbar. He wrote to Currie, therefore, that “The coyness of the Durbar is very natural, but it is very important that the proposal should originate with them—and in any document proceeding from them this admission must be stated in clear and unqualified terms; our reluctance to undertake a heavy responsibility must be set forth. The delay of a few days is not important as I may hear from Sir John Hobhouse by the mail hourly expected”<sup>2</sup>.

Apparently finding that the Durbar could not be easily brought round to make the required request to cover his wishes, the Governor General desired in his private letter of the 12th December to Currie to “*Persevere in your line of making the Sikh Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness to assent to any conditions imposed as the price of the continuance of our support.* In the preamble of the Supplementary Arts. this solicitation must clearly be their act”.

The Queen-mother Maharani Jind Kaur was considered a big stumbling block in the smooth operation of the plans of the Governor General and his political agent at Lahore. He had, therefore, written to Currie from his Camp at the Bridge across the Beas, on the 7th December 1846, that “in any arrangement made for con-

<sup>1</sup> Henry Lawrence to Government, 17th Dec. 1846.

<sup>2</sup> 10th December, 1846.

tinuing the occupation of Lahore, her deprivation of power is an indispensable condition." On the 10th he questioned the right of the Maharani to be the Regent of her son Maharaja Duleep Singh. "I am not aware," he said, "by what formal proceedings the Ranee became Regent—I presume by the unquestioned and natural position in which she stood as the mother and the guardian of the Prince." He further suggested that "If the Sirdars and influential chiefs, and especially the Attareewala family, urge the B. Govt. to be guardian of the Maha-Raja during his minority, the Ranee's power will cease silently and quietly, the admission being recorded that the Br. Govt. as the guardian of the Boy and administering the affairs of the State is to exercise all the functions and possess all the power of the Regent acting on behalf of the Prince".

To win the assent and adhesion of the chiefs to the conditions proposed to be imposed on the state of the Punjab, Sir Henry guaranteed the continuance of their Jagirs and wrote to Currie on the 14th December, 1846, from Camp Bhyrowal: "The guarantee to the chiefs of their Jagheers by British occupation must, I should think, be a powerful stimulus to ensure their adhesion to the conditions imposed."

This appears to have had the desired effect on some of the Sardars, coupled with the fear that had been instilled in their minds by the banishment of Raja Lal Singh during the previous week as punishment for his opposition to the British plans.

To make a show to the Lahore Darbar that the British troops garrisoned at Lahore were on the move, Sir Henry Hardinge issued instructions for certain military movements. In his private letter dated Camp Bhyrowal, Dec. 12th 1846, he wrote to Mr. Currie:

"I send this by express to desire that the Regt. of N. I., the two guns and the Irreg. Cav. escorting Lal Singh may *not return to Lahore*.

"These troops will cross the Sutlege and encamp at Ferozepoor till further orders, and the troops ordered from Ferozepoor to Kussoor will be countermanded.

*"My object is to give the Lahore Durbar a hint, that the garrison is on the move.*

"I also authorize you to send away another Regt. of N. I. from Lahore to Ferozepoor, there to encamp till further orders and not to be relieved by any Regt. from Ferozepoor.

"H. M. 80th Regt. will receive orders to be ready to march for Meerut at any moment. H. M. 10th are at Ferozepoor ready to relieve them—but will not move up till ordered, nor will it transpire that they are intended to relieve the 80th.

"These announcements will be made to accelerate the Durbar decision.

"In selecting the 2nd Regt. of N. I. which is to march on Ferozepore, the move ought to be made by the Regt. which has the longest march into the interior of Hindostan.

"I enclose a note from Lord Gough, which you will send with a note from yourself in case you deem it expedient to send away a second Regt., not forgetting that these 2 Regts., Cavy. and Artly., sent from Lahore are not to be relieved *at present* from Ferozepore."

On the 14th December, 1846, Sir Henry told Mr. Frederick Currie in a private letter:

"I authorize you to desire Sir John Littler to move all the troops out of Lahore the end of the week, on the day you may judge to be most expedient (except the 80th) encamping them as near as convenient to the citadel.

*"If this hint should be unnecessary by the temper of the chiefs to assent to our views, it will not be made."*



In the meantime some of the Sirdars had yielded to the pressure of Henry Lawrence and Frederick Currie. Sardar Sher Singh Attariwala had been made in-charge of the Royal palace in the fort of Lahore, and Tej Singh who had been made a Raja by the British, was of their own creation. They would not agree to the proposal of the Maharani being placed at the head of the state, while Diwan Dina Nath belonged to the loyalist party and favoured the elimination of the British control. There was a sharp division between the two. Apparently as a compromise, it was agreed to ask the Governor General to permit the Agent with two battalions to continue for some months, and the letter written on behalf of Maharaja Duleep Singh to Frederick Currie, Secretary to the Government of India, then at Lahore, on 30th Maghar 903 Bikrami, corresponding to 14th December 1846, in reply to the G. G.'s letter of the 9th December, ended with the following paragraph :

"As the Governor General is desirous of maintaining this state, it is not proper that the whole of the British force stationed here should be put to further inconvenience and annoyance. Nevertheless, with regard to the necessity for establishing the Government of the country and the fact of the time for the withdrawal of troops having arrived, it is hoped, that the agent, with two battalions, and one regiment of Cavalry and one battery, may be allowed to continue for some months, during which, what remains to be done to complete the organization of the Government in an efficient manner may be effected, and there is no doubt that Colonel Lawrence will according to the provisions of the Treaty, give every aid and assistance in establishing the Government."<sup>1</sup>

Sir Henry Hardinge was much upset to hear of the above from Frederick Currie. Evidently it was against his plans to help the Sikh Government for some months more to enable them to so organize their government as to be able to run it without British intervention. Therefore, he wrote back to him on the same evening at 5 O'clock p.m. :—

"It is my positive determination not to employ a British garrison in carrying on a native administration in the Punjab of which we have recently experienced so many instances of inefficiency, injustice and intrigue. I, therefore, will not consent to lend the aid of British troops to support a system on which no reliance can be placed.

"The proposal made of the aid of two regts. of Inf., one of Cav. and one Battery of Artillery is so absurd, that I consider it as equivalent to a desire to undertake the management of their own affairs, without our intervention.

"The chiefs are the sole judges in this affairs. I am ready to withdraw every man in faithful observance of the Treaty, and altho' I do not say that modifications in the instructions may not be sanctioned by me, after a full and deliberate hearing of the reasons which the chiefs may have to allege in favour of any alteration, nevertheless I will not consent to a force less in amount than 9 Battns. of Inf. with the present force of Artillery and Cavly. remaining at Lahore.

"I am the best judge of what force I consider it prudent to retain at Lahore, and you may rest their rejections of my conditions on the preliminary questions of the number of troops required for the occupation.

"The 9 Battns. may be reduced at the same time with other portions of the Inf. force to 800 r. & f. each, but those details are not dependent upon their consent. The sum to be paid will be independent of the no. of men to avoid all cavil, and the force will be kept up or not to 10,000 men, as the British Government may from time to time determine.

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<sup>1</sup> Papers relating to the Punjab 1844-47.

"I would recommend you to take up your ground on the amount of force and the amount of money to be paid by the Lahore Government for its expenses before you enter into other matters.

"I have written to you without an instant of hesitation as to the course to be pursued, and I authorize you to leave Lahore if on these two points you cannot obtain satisfactory answers."

In the course of the day, 14th December, 1846, Frederick Currie had replied in a most diplomatic manner to the Maharaja's letter with reference to its last paragraph quoted above, calling it "The request of your Highness." He wrote:

"The request of your Highness that a portion of the British force now at Lahore, and the Agent of the Governor General, should remain after the expiration of the stipulated time, which measures your Highness states to be necessary for the establishment of the Government of the country, involves a departure from the provisions of the Articles of Agreement executed on the 11th March last, and is a very important matter.

"It seems to me desirable that the chiefs of the Darbar, with the Sardars interested in the welfare of the Lahore State, should assemble at my Darbar tent, tomorrow, when I will lay before them distinctly the only conditions on which the Governor General will consent to a modification of the articles of agreement above referred to; and it will be well that these chiefs and the Sardars should be prepared to give a conclusive acquiescence or rejection of the said conditions, in order that the affair may be concluded, and the necessary orders given regarding the movement of the British force.<sup>1</sup>"

Armed with the positive determination and views of the Governor General conveyed to him in his private letters, Frederick Currie held a Darbar of the chiefs of the Darbar, and other Sardars of the state on the morning of the 15th December 1846 and read out to them a paper which contained "the only conditions" of the Governor General proposed to be imposed on the state of the Punjab in response to the "request" of the Maharaja.

Without much discussion all agreed. Dissentient voice there was none to be. By "perseverance" "in making the Sikh Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness to assent to any conditions imposed," and by offers and "guarantee to the chiefs of their Jagheers by British occupation," and by superior diplomacy the proposal itself had been managed to be made by the Darbar and the assent of the chiefs had been arranged previously. If there were any opposition to come, it was from the Regent, the Queen-mother Maharani Jind Kaur. And she was studiously and sternly ignored in these negotiations and consultations which were to shape the future of her son Maharaja Duleep Singh and the Government of Lahore under a British Resident who, as the paper read out by Mr. F. Currie, Secretary to the Government of India, declared, "must have full authority to interfere in, and to control all matters, in every department of the state."

"This proposition being communicated to the assembly," writes Henry Lawrence in his report of the 17th December, to Government in the person of Mr. Currie, "Dewan Dena Nath expressed a wish to adjourn, in order that they might take the opinion of the Maharani; but you informed him that the Governor General was not asking the opinion of the Queen-mother, but of the Sirdars and Pillars of the State." This stern and strong hint from the Secretary to the Government was enough to indicate to the assembled chiefs and Sardars the mind and the attitude of the Government and to silence any dissentient voice.

<sup>1</sup> F. Currie to H. M. Lawrence, 14th December 1846—Punjab Govt. Records Office monograph No. 16, appendix IX, p. xviii.

A small trifling reduction of two lacs in the amount of 24 lacs of rupees per annum demanded by the Governor General for the maintenance of the British force in the Punjab was the only modification made in the conditions imposed, which were otherwise agreed to by the Darbar *in toto*. And the proposed Treaty, afterwards called the *Treaty of Bhyrowal*, was concluded on the following day, the 16th December, 1846.<sup>1</sup>

On hearing from Frederick Currie that his Secretary, Currie himself, and Political Agent Henry Lawrence had succeeded in carrying through his wishes and views regarding the future of the Punjab by placing the country at his feet, and at his mercy, Sir Henry Hardinge wrote to him as follows in his private letter dated Camp Bhyrowal, December 16, 3 O'clock p.m.

"My dear Currie,

I have received your letter of the 15th morning written *before* the conference with the Sirdars, and the translated copy of the Persian Paper which you had laid before them containing the conditions—and I have also received your letter of the 15th, written after the meeting with the Sirdars which reached me at 8 O'clock this morning.

"The result deserves my most unqualified approbation—and I shall be happy to record another instance of approved ability, zeal, temper and judgment you have shown, aided by the local experience, reputation and well established influence of Lt. Col. Lawrence, whenever I receive your official report. It is quite impossible to have brought this affair to a more satisfactory conclusion.

"Your intimate knowledge of my sentiments, and the concurrence of our views in Punjab Politics, have enabled you most successfully to realize all the objects I had in view, not only in the substance of the arrangements made, but in the form of the proceeding, for you have conducted this matter so judiciously that the truth and sincerity of the policy cannot be brought into doubt or the Honour of the Government any impeachment. This Hindoo state has another opportunity afforded to it of establishing its Government and at the same time of securing by honourable means the tranquility of this frontier, and, I may hope, of all India.

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<sup>1</sup>. Among other things, the Treaty of Bhyrowal stipulated that :

"Article 2.—A British officer, with an efficient establishment of assistants, shall be appointed by the Governor General to remain at Lahore, which officer shall have full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the state."

"Article 5.—The following persons shall in the first instance constitute the council of Regency ..... and no change shall be made in the persons thus nominated, without the consent of the British Resident, acting under the orders of the Governor General."

"Article 7.—A British force, of such strength and numbers, and in such positions, as the Governor General may think fit, shall remain at Lahore for the protection of the Maharaja, and the preservation of the peace of the country."

"Article 8.—The Governor General shall be at liberty to occupy with British soldiers any fort or military post in the Lahore territories, the occupation of which may be deemed necessary by the British Government for the security of the Capital and maintaining peace of the country."

"Article 9.—The Lahore state shall pay to the British Government twenty-two lacs of new Nanakshahi rupees of full tale and weight per annum for the maintenance of this force, and to meet the expenses incurred by the British Government....."

"Article 10.—Inasmuch as it is fitting that Her Highness the Maharani, the mother of Maharaja Duleep Singh, should have a proper provision made for the maintenance of herself and her dependants, the sum of one lac and 50,000 rupees shall be set apart annually for the purpose, and shall be at Her Highness' disposal."

"Article 11.—The provisions of this engagement shall have effect during the minority of His Highness Maharaja Duleep Singh, and shall cease and terminate on His Highness attaining the full age of 16 years, or on the 4th September, 1854 ; ....."



"The moral effect of the Sikh Chiefs entreating the British Government to become the Guardian of their Prince, by the continuance of a British garrison at Lahore and our consent to undertake the responsible charge must be felt throughout Asia in raising the reputation and extending the influence of the British character.

"Personally I may regret that it has not been my fate to plant the British standard on the Banks of the Indus. I have taken the less ambitious course, and I am consoled by the reflection that I have acted right in the interests of England and of India.

"Be the judgment what it may, as far as I am concerned, the struggle between military feeling and political duty is over—and I will refer to matters of business.

"I quite concur in the trifling reduction to which you very properly consented in the sum to be paid for the troops.

"The point which may admit of some discussion relates to the disposal of the Ranee.

"It is quite proper and agreed upon between us that the lady should no longer exercise any power as Regent. The question is limited to the amount of the sum to be given for the suitable maintenance of the Maharaja's mother and the place of her residence. The diminished revenue of the state must be considered in apportioning the sum and this can be adjusted by the chiefs at once.

"As to her residence there is an objection to separate her from her son on the ground of her political intrigues, counteracting the measures of the new Government, as it may be said (and obtain sympathy) that she is punished in anticipation of any political offence which she has committed.

"I am [of] opinion that she will be more harmless at Lahore than in any other part of the Punjab. If she should become troublesome and her expatriation be justified, she must be sent across the Sutlege, in which case she might perhaps be domiciled in the Raja of Ladwas' House and occasionally see her son. As Runjeet's wife, and the mother of the Prince of *all the Sikhs*! I am disposed to act with caution, although the notoriety of her profligacy [?] by itself would be a strong case of justification. I don't think she would find an Alderman Wood to conduct her in triumph through the streets of Lahore.

"I have just seen John Lawrence. He seems to be of opinion that the new arrangement might be signed by the Maha-Raja coming to this Camp and seeking me, followed by my paying him in return a friendly visit at Umritsir or Lahore. I should prefer this course, because I should like with Sir J. Littler to visit the works at Lahore and make an arrangement better calculated to keep the sepoys and the Town's people separate.

"In the long run, depend upon it, the town's people will like us the better, the more we are separated from them."

(Then follow details of the movements of troops.)

"If there should be any feeling that the distance is too great or the submission of signing the Treaty in the B. territory an act of dignity, I am quite ready to go to Umritsir,—but after the Cashmeir affairs; I rather think the meeting here is the most politic course. Settle it as you think best after consultations with the Chiefs, etc.

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"Again, my dear Currie let me express the cordial and affectionate regard for all the valuable services you render to me, and above all to the state.

" In closely examining this piece of diplomatic work, I cannot find that you have omitted a single point.

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Yours very sincerely,  
Hardinge. "

The above is the last of the private letters of Sir Henry Hardinge, the Governor General of India to Mr. Frederick Currie, Secretary to the Government of India, then on deputation to Lahore on the subject of the Treaty of Bhyrowal, and which throw so much of new light on it.

We had been told in the preamble of the Treaty, the public correspondence and official documents, and in the books on the history of that period, that " the Lahore Darbar and the Principal chiefs and Sirdars of the state have, in express terms, communicated to the British Government their anxious desire that the Governor General should give his aid and his assistance to maintain the administration of the Lahore state during the minority of Maharajah Duleep Singh, and have declared this measure to be indispensable for the maintenance of the government," and that Lord Hardinge had given " reluctant assent " to it. But now we know from a study of the private letters of Sir Henry Hardinge that the Lahore Darbar had no such " anxious desire " in the beginning and that it was only after the chiefs and Sardars had been worked upon for some time that a letter was written on behalf of Maharaja Duleep Singh, on the 14th December 1846 saying : " it is hoped, that the Agent, with two battalions, and a regiment of Cavalry, and one battery, may be allowed to continue for some months, during which what still remains to be done to complete the organization of the Government in an efficient manner may be effected." But Sir Henry Hardinge refused this aid " for some months. " He would either give no aid at all or retain a ten times larger force, " at liberty to occupy with British soldiers any fort or military post," keep a British Resident " with full authority to direct and control all matters in every department of the state," become the guardian of the Maharaja, deprive the Queen-mother of all power as the Regent and stay in the country for about eight years, receiving not less than twenty-two lacs of rupees a year. Finding the Darbar coy to agree to the wishes of the G. G., Frederick Currie was asked to " persevere in your line of making the Durbar propose the condition or rather their readiness to assent to any conditions imposed as the price of the continuance of our support." He was further directed to see that " in the preamble of the supplementary Articles this solicitation must clearly be their act." And ultimately all this was so diplomatically managed as to give it the desired appearance.